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FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF

LAVINIA L. DOCK, R.N.

A DANISH NURSING LEADER HONORED

Back of the glare and flames of war, the upbuilding and protection of society still rest in many trustworthy hands, and it is refreshing to hear from Denmark of the honors and appreciation recently shown to the president of the Danish Council of Nurses, Mrs. Henny Tscherning, who is also, it must be remembered, the president of the International Council of Nurses and who was to have presided at its meeting in this country, had not our plans been overthrown by the great cataclysm.

At the beginning of this year, Mrs. Tscherning's fortieth year as a leader in nursing was celebrated, and on that occasion she was decorated by the King of Denmark with the golden Medal of Merit, in recognition of her professional and educational work of years. Miss Jessen, secretary of the Danish Council, has been kind enough to send us the following account from the *Nurses' Journal*.

It is now forty years since Mrs. Tscherning took her first steps along the way she, more than anyone else among us, has striven to open to the thousands of young women who have since then followed her example. When Mrs. Tscherning, then Miss Schultz, began her work in 1878, as probationer in the second ward of the Municipal Hospital, Copenhagen, nursing both in state and municipal hospitals was at a very low level, being as it was, left to women from quite uncultured homes. Her work which was in itself most exhausting, was made yet more arduous by the suspicious attitude of the wards-women, the patients and many physicians. She and a few other cultured young probationers were considered hard-hearted by the patients, because they insisted that the doctors' orders must be strictly obeyed, which was contrary to the habits of the old staff.

There were, however, some few doctors, such as Professor Fenger, who was Mayor and Director of the Hospitals, who understood how greatly a reform of the nursing method was needed, partly on account of the proper nursing of the patients, and still more so as antiseptic treatment was going to be adopted. After having worked for some months as a probationer of the second ward, Miss Schultz was appointed ward-woman of the surgical ward, where she shortly after was promoted as head nurse, a position that she held for seven years, working for the education of the first properly trained nurses in Denmark. Her work at the hospital came to a close, but her warm interest in the cause of nursing was not cooled, and when she was offered the position of president of the newly founded Danish Council of Nurses, she did not hesitate to accept it. The work which Mrs. Tscherning in these last eighteen years has performed in that office has been of so comprehensive and often so difficult a nature that no one person would have been able to perform it without a harmonious blending of energy and capability. The never-failing energy and burning interest of Mrs. Tscherning in the cause of nursing is known by all who have had an opportunity of

observing her activity, but only the relatively few who have in the course of years been closely connected with her in her daily work know her warm interest in the welfare of each of the members of the Danish Council of Nurses. Mrs. Tscherning never shuns exertion nor trouble if she may thereby help a single member, and many are the steps she has taken and the hours she has spent in order to obtain a benefit for one of these whom she considers it her duty as President and a personal joy to assist and to guide.

The results of her work are so commonly acknowledged that we shall only call attention to a few points where her work has reached special results. First of all, Mrs. Tscherning has successfully worked for a thoroughly satisfactory training of nurses through three years' work in hospitals and similar institutions. The importance of this reform has been acknowledged by the State by its granting to the Danish Council of Nurses an annual sum of money which is used to procure a supplementary training of those nurses who have not obtained the full training of three years. This has benefited not only the hospitals but, through the private nurses, also the homes all over the country. As President of the Danish Council of Nurses, which now counts about 3000 properly trained nurses, Mrs. Tscherning has been working to elevate and support the profession of nurses and to give them better conditions. It is due to Mrs. Tscherning's initiative that a Sick Club of nurses, now recognized by the State, was established in 1901, a Convalescent Home, "Dansk Sygeplejersaads Rekreationshjem for Sygeplejersker," in 1904, and a Relief and Old Age Savings Bank for Nurses in 1912.

The forty years' jubilee was celebrated by a very fine festival at the Palace Hotel; the Committee having invited Mrs. Tscherning and her nearest relatives. A great many nurses from Copenhagen and provincial hospitals were present. The speech in honor of Mrs. Tscherning was made by Miss Munck, Bispebjerg Hospital, who said in part: "It is always difficult to be a pioneer for a good cause, but to fight for a good and useful development of nursing methods and at the same time for improved circumstances for the nurses is almost impossible. The first task puts many claims to the sacrifice and renunciation of self, the last one claims self assertion and a certain declaration of one's own right. Mrs. Tscherning has known how to do both, and thanks are due to her because she always maintained the first as the essential point that was never to be eclipsed by the struggle for better circumstances. She has, indeed, not always been thanked for this. If I were to point out some of the characteristics of Mrs. Tscherning's work throughout the years, I should name faculties as initiative, indefatigableness and perseverance. Mrs. Tscherning's initiative and richness of ideas often made me marvel,—there was always new land to gain, dangers to avoid, reforms which were absolutely necessary. The indefatigableness proved itself most clearly at our committee meetings when, after three or four hours' discussion we were exhausted and dull, Mrs. Tscherning would lift her voice and say: 'You cannot go now, we have a most important affair to discuss,' and then she would lay it out to us, full of interest and eagerness. * * * And the perseverance has been needed, mostly perhaps during the first years, but certainly also up to our days. No doubt many of the causes she carried on would not have met with success, if it had not been for the perseverance with which she suffered objection and misjudgment, steadily driving on, unshaken in her conviction that the cause was good in itself and worth the fighting. * * * The Danish Council of Nurses was fortunate in having a President who was willing to walk the thorny paths that she has trodden, and we are happy this evening in being able to honor her as the one who made our cause progress. The golden medal on

her breast, the great number of people who have wanted to gather round her, and the many who have thought of her and sent her signs of their respect and gratitude are proofs that her work has not been in vain, but has reached fine results and appreciation. I will quote some words spoken by our much admired Florence Nightingale: 'What greater reward can a good worker desire than that the next generation should forget him, regarding as an absolute truism that which his own generation called a visionary's fanaticism?'

"May God grant you unbroken strength for many years to come, and may you reap the reward that all your best and truest wishes for nursing and the nurses may come true in the life and work of coming generations."

THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE SCHOOL IN BORDEAUX

Dr. Hamilton has been justly recognized and rewarded for her labors by having a cordial consent given her by Mr. Shore Nightingale, Miss Nightingale's executor, to possess and claim for her nursing school the name of Florence Nightingale. Dr. Hamilton will now file a declaration in the official French quarter dealing with such questions, requesting the legal recognition of her right to claim the monopoly of this name. The war is, of course, greatly enhancing the prestige of nursing in France, but one result of this is the growth of amateur work, usually with most inadequate standards. For instance, a certain "nursing school" named for Edith Cavell gives courses from fifteen days to three months long.

Dr. Hamilton has written us accounts of the recent commencement at her school, part of which has not yet arrived, but the mail brought the final pages in which we learn that Dr. Richard Cabot sat as one of the examiners. For him a baby's bath was prepared and the baby's toilet made. He was much amused at having about fifteen samples of herbs used for teas (tisanes) explained by the nurses with their names and uses. Sara E. Parsons was also there to see the practical demonstrations given by the pupils. The school is to extend its course to three years very shortly, and when the staff who entered under the former contract have finished, the three years' course will be the regulation. Dr. Hamilton is a white burning flame of high idealism and we hope some of the Americans who see her work will help to get her new hospital buildings.